

# **JOINT MEETING NS TOWN COUNCIL/SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**FEBRUARY 10, 2014**

**NORTH SMITHFIELD HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM**

**7:00**

**P.M.**

**The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M. Council members present were Ms. Alves, Mr. McGee, Mr. Yazbak, Mr. Zwolenski and Mr. Flaherty. Also in attendance were Town Administrator Hamilton and Town Solicitor Lombardi.**

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**MOTION by Ms. Alves, seconded by Mr. Zwolenski, and voted 3 to 2 on a roll call vote (Mr. McGee and Mr. Yazbak voted no) to enter into executive session at 7:02 P.M. pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5(A)(2) Sessions pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation, or work sessions**

**February 10, 2014**

**pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation to discuss potential litigation regarding the school department projected deficit.**

**(Mr. Yazbak did not participate in executive session)**

**MOTION by Mr. McGee, seconded by Mr. Zwolenski, and voted 4 to 0 on a roll call vote (Mr. Yazbak did not vote as he did not attend**

executive session) to come out of executive session at 8:08 P.M. and to seal the minutes. No motions were made and no votes were taken.

School Committee Chairman Robert Lafleur was quite upset that the School Committee had to wait for an hour for the Town Council to come out of executive session. He asked to meet immediately with Town Administrator Hamilton, Mr. Lombardi and School Department Attorney Scungio. When Mr. Flaherty responded that would happen at the appropriate time, the School Committee adjourned its meeting and all members left the room. School Committee members Narodowy and Connell did return and there was subsequent dialogue with them.

Mr. Flaherty identified each of the Budget Committee members and gave background information and their duties as written in the Town Charter.

Ms. Alves gave a slide presentation to explain the actions of a majority of the Council members. Some of the topics mentioned included history of the school department budget over the past several years, “pay to play”, funds raised by the booster club, a request from the Town to return \$112,000 given to the school department for a deficit that turned out to be less than expected, inability to provide requested purchase orders to correspond with expenditures, the request for a single auditing firm for both the town and the school department and the need for mutual participation in

meetings by both boards.

Ms. Alves stated any reasonable fix requires an understanding and verification of the extent of the alleged deficit. Absent that, it is simply writing a blank check.

Mr. Flaherty stated that, with the proposed agreement, the Council is trying to stop this problem from happening every two to three years and it divides the community. This agreement will cover the entire amount of the projected deficit up to \$470,000 and it requires the School Committee to fully cooperate with the town by having full disclosure.

Mr. Yazbak felt that the proposal by the majority of the Council to fund the \$240,000 on the last day of the fiscal year just doesn't work. He hopes that a majority will reconsider and send the money over now and then do the due diligence and investigation into the other \$230,000.

**MOTION** by Mr. Yazbak and seconded by Mr. McGee to send the \$240,000 over now and then discuss the \$230,000 after that.

Mr. Flaherty firmly believes the Council did not agree to give the \$240,000 to the school department but there appears to be a widespread perception that there was agreement. He could be convinced to send the \$240,000 now but only if there is agreement

with the rest of the Council to move forward with a plan such as was proposed this evening that ensures full accountability going forward.

Mr. McGee agreed with Mr. Yazbak that the \$240,000 was budgeted and should be given. It would at least get people working together again.

Roll call vote: Ms. Alves - no; Mr. McGee - yes; Mr. Yazbak - yes; Mr. Zwolenski - no; Mr. Flaherty - no. The motion failed.

Mr. Zwolenski was amenable to releasing the \$240,000 but he wanted people to be aware that it does not necessarily have to be earmarked for sports or school activities. He still needs to have the deficit verified.

**February 10, 2014**

**MOTION by Mr. Zwolenski and seconded by Mr. Yazbak to release the \$240,000 this evening to the School Committee to be used as they deem fit and he asks that the School Committee cooperate with the Town**

**Council to work out some agreement where we won't be in this**

situation in three or four years down the road and where we have one auditor for this town.

Mr. Flaherty commented that the initial Town Council proposed deficit elimination agreement sent to the School Committee was rejected as unacceptable. Mr. Flaherty indicated that the proposed agreement was then modified to accommodate some of the School Committee's concerns. Specifically he cited that all references to an ad hoc committee for review of the school finances were removed and replaced with a provision for the hiring of an independent accounting review to verify the existence and extent of the school department's projected deficit."

Mr. Zwolenski opted not to amend his motion because he felt he would not get a unanimous vote on it and he wanted to do this for the students.

On a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

**MOTION** by Mr. Zwolenski and seconded by Ms. Alves to forward to the School Committee the latest revised version of the agreement and to authorize the Town Council president to sign it.

Roll call: Ms. Alves - yes; Mr. McGee - yes; Mr. Yazbak - (did not vote as he did not attend executive session and therefore did not see the agreement); Mr. Zwolenski - yes; and Mr. Flaherty - yes. The motion

**passed unanimously.**

**MOTION by Ms. Alves, seconded by Mr. Zwolenski, and voted unanimously on an aye vote to adjourn at 8:54 P.M.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Debra A. Todd, Town Clerk**